

# PETE THE PERFECT WAITER MAKES IT A BUSINESS TO PLEASE PALATES

By JANE DIXON.

New York's Exceptional Gentleman of the Serviette Who Markets for His Patrons, Takes Pride in His Job and Forgets the Tip Tray

IN a certain restaurant on Sixth avenue there is a man who makes a business of waiting.

"There is no such animal," comes the chorus from armies of long suffering patrons of restaurants. "Waiting is no longer a business. It is a profession. Waiters are no longer servants. They are expert accountants."

No argument is interposed against this general denunciation of food traffic. The average waiter of today is a "chick" (fool) with soundproof ears and pliable change fingers. He is so busy flapping on just how much of a bonus you will hand him that he puts the same tartare on the salad instead of on the sole and substitutes a finger bowl for the coffee cup before you have had a chance to get the full aroma of your favorite blend.

Every rule has its exception. The rule of professional waiters is no exception to this rule. The exception is Pete, the Perfect Waiter.

In the certain Sixth avenue restaurant devoted to fine French foods and strange dishes native to the boulevards of that dear Paris, Pete is engaged in the business of waiting. He is stuck on his job. He believes it is the finest job in the world, and he will take physical abuse with you at the drop of a hat if you intimate anything else.

Pete is a grand and glorious exponent of the theory that the man makes the job, not the job the man. He has lifted the word waiter out of the mire of mediocrity and placed it on the pedestal of art. To him a dish perfectly prepared and served is a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

He lifts the cover from a fragrant, delicately browned guinea hen much as a painter lifts the curtain from one of his pictures. If it is not done to his satisfaction he frowns and mutters and calls down maledictions on the head of the luckless chef. If it is entirely right he smiles broadly and expands in the sun of success. A culinary faux pas makes Pete feel the same as the worst who has just had his manuscript turned down flat by the editor.

Pete is not one of those high and mighty gentlemen of the serviette who rush in at the last moment, polish on their badge of service and whisk up their tip trays for the harvest.

He has a different system, has Pete. At the crack of dawn you will meet him making his way to the markets. He is hitting the food trail, and no choicer cut is safe so long as he is on the watch.

Mr. Jones, the merchant, whom Pete has served no less than ten years, has a passion for artichokes. The artichoke supply is gone over with a fine tooth comb and the best selected. This is the day Mr. Jones dines at the restaurant with his wife.

Robinson and his wife are more recent patrons of Pete, but he has not forgotten their weakness for endive salad. Only the crispest, the tenderest of endive is considered, and it takes the waiter shopper at least ten minutes to make a decision, so important is the issue.

Cassaba melons are in season. He finds one that promises to melt in the mouth for Mr. Brown, who works on a newspaper downtown and spends the hours outside the office in being an expert. Brown will be tickled to death over that melon, but not half as tickled as Pete. Then Pete finds a quart of strawberries, the first of the winter season, for the young chap who likes to surprise his sweetheart, and he is so pleased with the purchase that he chuckles all the way to work.

Arrived at the restaurant Pete dons his little apron, assumes a look of complete effacement, and gets down to business. He studies the luncheon menu with a thoroughness that allows no guilty dish to escape. His business is to please palates and he knows exactly what needs are at his command.

Regular disciples of Pete drop in, find his tables and dispose themselves for a space of complete enjoyment. Pete gives them a verbal line on the available supply. He separates the sheep dishes from the goat dishes. If there is something new in culinary effects he knows its ingredients and what it looks like when finished. He knows every bottle of wine in the cellar by its first and second names and how much it will set you back in the matter of money.

He has a thousand and one drinks on the tip of his tongue and he also has an uncanny gift of being able to pick out exactly the ones which appeal to his palate. He believes it is the finest job in the world, and he will take physical abuse with you at the drop of a hat if you intimate anything else.

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"I don't like to tell de orders how dey do times, I like de dem myself. To strut up an' down de aisle es no job for me. I wait. I serve de dishes. Dat is my business."

This plaint proves beyond cavil that there are men who have not been bitten by the bossing bug, though they are so sure as to be practically extinct.

As the hands on Pete's honest gold watch, which resembles the thin anemic timekeepers of today as a hot waffle with maple syrup resembles a soda cracker—as these hands crawl toward the evening hour rays of light begin to sneak through the gloom on Pete's face, his sentence of being highly dressed up is about served. Soon he will shed his solemn wardrobe and be merely a waiter.

Promptly at 7 Pete again disappears. When he returns he is once more the genial servant with the broad smile, expanding in the sun of anticipated success. Dishes such as would cause the Kaiser to decorate Pete with the iron cross are magically called into being. Nectar of the gods has nothing on the liquid refreshments concocted by Pete.

"Try dis pomper, madame," suggests Pete, sensing the thirst in your throat. "It es delicious de perfume de grape."

You sip the rosy liquid joy and are transported to the slopes whereon the vines hung heavy with their fragrant fruit.

"What is it, Pete?" you ask.

"It es delicious de perfume de grape," repeats Pete, sensing the thirst in your throat. "I es delicious de perfume de grape."

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"Simple to make, madame. Creme de cassis one-third, French vermouth two-thirds, an' fill de glass with soda."

You determine to go home and fix yourself a flock of pomper. But somehow, when you do, they are not quite like the ones concocted by Pete. With him a pomper is an art. With you it is simply a drink.

Where will you find the perfect waiter? I will tell you if you promise to stand in line and not crowd. He is at Mousinis.

The old order changeth to be sure, but always a few of the old order remain. There is another waiter who makes a business of waiting, or there was up to the time of the last war news from the front.

This particular example of his ilk was a combination waiter and chef. For three years he had been preparing and serving meals for a prominent financier of New York. This man was so impressed with the thought that Jules was a waiter, that he took his meals in the restaurant where Jules was chef at odd hours in order to have his exclusive services. No one could prepare broast of chicken and Virginia ham like Jules. Never was there such a salad as was evolved by Jules. Jules' French poetry was the finest in the world, bar none.

Then war came. Jules was a son, and a son of France. He heard the call of his country above the sizzle of the chicken croquettes. Painted cheeks of the music from the cabaret brought to mind the military band behind which he should be marching to glorious victory.

One day Gen. Joffre passed that way and stopped for dinner. Jules was detailed to prepare the meal for the General and his staff. A half hour later he received orders to pack his kit and be ready to leave with the General's escort. He had been appointed personal chef to Joffre.

He writes that despite that glittering glory he is homesick for America. So it looks as if Jules will return to his real business, the business of being a combination waiter and chef.

Where will you find the perfect waiter and chef? I sense the German war diet Joffre, which seems extremely unlikely at the present writing, you will find Jules at Bismarck's when the fight is finished.

The business of waiting may not always be as profitable as the profession of waiting, but it is a heap more fun.

One day when he left the truffles of five years from the bank, handed them to the wife and sailed away.

"I had a letter from the seaway the other day," said the proprietor who sought in vain to keep Jules from being an active partner. "He was around in camp for three months waiting to be sent to the front. He had more meat than they could use, and he was getting restless."

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and the chocolate eclairs to their fate and hid him to the office of the French Consul to report for duty.

When the financier came for his daily culinary treat there was no Jules to be found. He stormed. He raved. It must be Jules or nobody. At last Jules was found. He announced his intention to lay down the carving fork for the musket. The financier pleaded. Jules was obdurate.

Then the proprietor of the restaurant had a happy thought. He went to the wife of Jules and persuaded her to go into court and impose a weekly allowance on Jules. The financier had his money all turned up for a set of crepes Suzette. Alas for the wisest plans of mice and men! Jules drew his savings

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The silver waiter.

That is it. It is a heap more fun in the kitchen of his guests, ignoring the inter-dining, though the professional waiter knows too his hour of triumph.

A case in point is that of a well known man of multifarious money who was sending his family to the other side of a holiday. There was a party dinner suit on the ship he was very anxious to engage, both because it was the most elaborately equipped and the best situated. What was his chairman upon inquiry to find the suite had been taken.

He instructed the agents to offer a very comfortable sum to the holder for the release of the suite. Nothing doing. He offered to pay for an entire suite almost as cheap as adjoining the one he desired. Again nothing doing.

After various other efforts, all fruitless, he resigned himself to the inevitable. The day of the starting arrived. He accompanied his family to the ship for farewell. As they were about to enter their state they saw the sea and green dressed folk on board turning in at the wheel desired deck. The new-comer wheeled around to assist the lady with some luggage.

The much moneyed man reeled and gasped for breath. The captain of the choice suite was Pierre, the service fellow who found him a table in his favorite restaurant three or four years ago, and he was now a five spot to be pressed into his path for the service. Moreover, Pierre looked straight through him as if he were an inanimate part of the furnishings and slipped a brass buttoned somebody an order for a quart of the kind of champagne he invariably cooled for the millionaire.

Yves are acquainted with the best of them. Among them was the one who always knows what you want for dinner better than you do yourself.

"Well, have some time with you with cocktail sauce," ordered the host at a dinner the other evening.

"I think you'll find the Blue Point better," the waiter offered.

How about a few small medium rare and some sweet potatoes," the host inquired.

But the fact remains that the waiter is not entirely to blame. Indeed, sociologists who have studied the problem agree that she is a very small part of the cause of what is becoming a recognized social evil. The blame is to be found in the lower, even from the lowest, walks of European life. Immigrants have been pouring into this country for years, remaining in New York, unless some reason forces them to leave for another part of the country. They and their forebears have lived under conditions which nobody sane in this country can find attractive.

The moral standard of the East was never so high as the moral standard of the West, either in business or in social life. When, therefore, these uneducated hordes from the slums of the cities or from the poverty stricken farms and villages of the old country, having witnessed all their lives the power and prestige that money gave to their superiors, found themselves free to take advantage here of the opportunities that were denied to them at home, what was to be expected? "Get money!" became their slogan and they were snipped day and night at the shrine of the dollar, working like mad things and regarding the means of obtaining the coveted wealth so long as they did not come under the condemnation of the law. Their debts, oblique transactions, evasions of honesty and their neighbors' rights did not seem to them to involve moral turpitude, so long as they escaped the penalty and got what they wanted.

So they taught their children, these people of another time, both terror and in their lives of life, to precept and example. These children grew up to be the generation of the present day. Dominating in numbers, aggressive in business, they entered every commercial and professional field, carrying with them the teachings of their fathers and applying them to their own ends. As a little heaven will heaven the whole lump, so they have laid the business of today, and not a man will deny that the methods pursued are rotten to the core, and that "leave, emptor" applies now in fuller measure than ever before in the history of the nation.

It is impossible to lower the tone of business morals without at the same time lowering the tone of the morals of the social life. So, loss of fair appreciation of the finer points of manhood and womanhood followed as naturally and as surely as the night the day. That in the belief of many, is the true and fundamental reason why the American public can only do but look for clean and improving theatrical productions but when it has deteriorated morally in other matters.

## SUBWAY OCCUPATIONS.

When the subway was first opened to the public there was some discussion

# New York Does Not Care for Good Plays or Artistic Productions, Declares Writer

By L. WALTER SAMMIS.

THE recent failure of the Lieber company, for so long successful purveyors of a high class entertainment to the people of New York and of the entire country, serves to emphasize the question that is being asked in many quarters: "What is the matter with the American people? Why have they changed so radically within the last generation?"

That they have changed, and not for the better, in all walks of life, nobody who has not seen New York for some time, but who has seemed to place his finger on the reason, is as sure as fate of the answer. The answer is that the people of New York, and of the entire country, are not interested in the theater, and that the cause may not be found in excessive immigration.

In the theatrical business, not to mention other lines at present, the trend downward is marked. The people of New York will go to see a good play, an artistic production, or a show that will stimulate them mentally, but will patronize light, frothy, plotless or morally questionable plays to the satisfaction of the box office; and as New York goes so goes the country. It is peculiarly true in theatricals that New York is the pivot upon which the entire country swings, and only in very rare instances does the country follow the lead until after it has had a successful run in New York.

That is why there is more than a million dollars worth of scenery, costumes and properties stored away, each representing a failure and the whole worth as much as \$5,000 today. Add to this loss of approximately a million dollars salaries paid while trying out the pieces, rent of theatres and other incidentals, and the total is enormous. It is not to be wondered at that theatrical managers are in despair, especially since there seems to be no hope of change.

For years this downward trend in the taste of the people has been observed, but the exhibition of this season has been more disastrous than ever before. Managers will not talk freely about it, but when they talk at all the conclusion is forced that more than 50 per cent of the plays offered to the New York public close after the first week are continued at a loss. Bad as other seasons have been, and some managers remember a few that almost wiped them out financially, no producer has ever lost another year so bad as this. Several managers who have kept their fingers on the pulse of the public for years, and who have seen the tide of change coming, are now in a state of panic, and are throwing up their hands in despair and asking what they can do to please the people and profit therefrom; for the one result of this is to please the other.

It is idle to say that this is entirely because of the financial condition of the country or of the great war in Europe or both. It is true that people are a little more careful in their expenditures than they were a while ago, but when they are when times are good and business prosperous, but there is no such great falling off in attendance at the moving picture shows, which are very largely patronized by people of small means; cabarets and dance halls are well attended and plays of a certain character are not thrown into the scrap heap, if they are of a high grade, such as the Lieber Company, for instance, always put out, were not the only ones to suffer, some such argument might obtain; but it cannot merit serious consideration since performances that appeal to the lightest or unhighest thoughts are the only ones that succeed, especially since none of that class that has the slightest merit fails to draw paying crowds.

The fact is that the mental attributes of the people of New York, and after them those of the people of the whole country, are deteriorating; a bold and harsh statement, but one not incapable of demonstration. It applies to business and social life, and even to religious life, and the effect upon the theater is only a corollary, or a natural result.

The rush, the hurry, the wild chase of the dollar, now more elusive than ever before; the scramble for wealth and the nervous strain superinduced by present day methods of doing business, methods to which the national character would not stoop twenty-five years ago, are responsible for the clearly observable deterioration of the American citizen in character and morals. And that is why, as one theatrical manager put it, the people will not go to see a play that is really worth while, but will support a play that their young daughters ought not to see, or one that affords mental relaxation and nothing else.

"The country is really dollar mad," said this manager, "and will not permit the use of his name, 'and men go to a show to relieve their minds from action, not for stimulation. They want to have their minds taken off not only business, but all other serious thoughts as well. It is this mental condition that makes them hit the bar at 7 o'clock in the evening."

"People are too clever in business nowadays and the cleverness of a competitor puts a man under a strain from which he needs relief when his task is over or his work suspended. Some seek this relief in the quiet of their homes, some in shows of a character which under other physical and nervous conditions would not attract them at all; but very few seek the mental stimulation of a serious play."

"Of course, people will follow the fashion in going to the theatre as well as in anything else, but the heads of our fashionable families are tired business men, their wives and daughters follow where they lead. If it were fashionable to go to see Shakespeare, for instance, people who flock to Shakespearean plays, but for the reason I have given, it is not fashionable. Judge from the theatre audience if this is not so. Look at the crowds coming out of a theatre where a successful play is being performed and you will see that the high heels have followed the low heels; that the flowery has come to Broadway to mingle with Fifth avenue in all its glory."

Asserts Marked Downward Trend in Taste of Public Accounts for Millions of Dollars in Losses to the Managers--Says 90% of Plays Offered Are Withdrawn or Continued at a Loss.

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"Plays of the character of 'Daddy Longlegs,' 'Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch' and others I might mention that are not, like those, without moral turpitude, succeed. Belasco's 'Good Little Devil' produced a case of \$130,000, failed, nobody would go to see 'The Highway of Life' except a few lovers of Dickens, and neither 'The Garden of Paradise' or Phyllis Nielson Terry in 'Twelfth Night' appeals to the theatregoer of today. Everybody played about the beauties of certain productions, but nobody supported them. And who today would go to see a Florence or a Booth, or any other actor of dignity in a dignified play?"

People went to see Forbes-Robertson in Shakespearean characters last season, but that was only because he had attained a measure of popularity, after many efforts, in 'The Third Floor Back' and it was, for the moment, fashionable to see him. The same is true of the big business done by Sarah Bernhardt when she was last in this country. People went to see her who could not understand a word of French, but only because it was advertised as her farewell appearance and everybody wanted to say he had seen that great actress before it was too late.

"The trend of people's taste is downward, and the sooner theatrical managers appreciate that they are confronted by that condition, and not by a theory, the better it will be for their pockets. Their business is to amuse the people, not to educate them. It is cruelly hard, but if the people decline to do other than wallow in the gutter and in the slums of the earth, the theatrical manager must give them that class of entertainment or go out of business, no matter about his own sense of what is right or best, and regardless of how ardently he may wish to elevate the taste of the people or the morals of the stage."

"Look at the theatrical profession, as distinguished from the theatrical business, and judge if this is not correct. I venture to say that if you were to

assemble all the actors of the United States today on one stage nobody would be able to pick out a single one who was representative of the dignity of the profession. The comedian and not the real actor, the comedy or the frothy play, not the serious and representative performance, are attracting the people and getting the money."

That the country is money mad, and that methods of capturing the dollar which would condemn a man a generation ago are now looked upon as indications of cleverness and not as examples of moral obliquity, is evident wherever two or three men are gathered together. Almost invariably they converse in the inflex of money and the exchange of every other subject, and they tell with delight how they deceived a man into buying a bill of goods or into signing a contract, how they fooled a competitor and got his business away from him, as unbusinesslike as their fathers would have spoken of more meritorious actions.

The dollar is the subject of conversation in the hotel lobbies and the theatre foyers, and even the vestibules of churches are not free from it. Men walk away from a football, baseball or other athletic contest, talking, not about the features of the occasion, but of the amount of gate money taken in or the high pay of the players or contestants. The much talked of "bird business man," who requires amusement and distraction from his office affairs, is no more with us now than was a decade ago. And if he is tired, why is he always talking shop, even between his small bites of amusement?"

The same condition that obtains in regular theatricals prevails, it appears, in the moving picture field, new comedy popular and drawing thousands where the theatres, even in their palmy days of big successes, drew hundreds. Even in its life, brief as it has been, the motion picture business has felt the deterioration of the taste of the American people.

Not a few big, spectacular pieces, produced at enormous cost and selling well at first, are interesting stories of life have failed. Some of the plays that had the widest popularity on the speaking stage have been reproduced in motion pictures, the popular stars playing their own likenesses, only to become popular and drawing thousands where the theatres, even in their palmy days of big successes, drew hundreds. Even in its life, brief as it has been, the motion picture business has felt the deterioration of the taste of the American people.

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year through his subsidiary companies, has like others in the same line, tried to give the people high class drama to his cost. Discussing the subject Mr. Aitkin said:

"I still believe that the American public is interested in the serious problems of life, but it is not willing to accept them as such. They must be disguised in a cloak of lighter diversions. The 'tired business man' is really tired, more so than his father was. He has such compelling competition that he is short on sleep, exercise, fresh air and rest."

"He would like to follow up the reading of his youth, he would like to take advantage of his heredity, but he is not willing to do so. He is short on sleep, exercise, fresh air and rest."

"I read out early in the history of this country a series of pictures along scientific and historical lines. They were really fine, but they were merely educational. The public complained to the exhibitor, the exhibitor complained to the exchange man and the exchange man complained to us. We also being after the elusive dollar, the pictures had to be taken off."

"But, being somewhat stubborn, I still adhered to the notion that the tired business man should have some substance with his entertainment, so I put on serious matter dressed up so that it amused while it gives a man an opportunity to think if he wants to. Such a one is the new picture we are going to show to the people. It is a picture of a woman who wants money but does not like actually to accept it from a man."

"While I agree with you that the conditions under which business is transacted today are largely responsible for the